



# Creativity



*Do it. Make it.  
Break it. Shape it.  
Build it.*

**HOLSTEE**

WELCOME TO

# Creativity

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It may be rooted deep within you.

Or it may be floating on the surface,  
a occasional itch that you scratch.

It may be prompted by a view,  
a conversation, or necessity.

It can broaden your perspective and  
even create new paradigms.

This is creativity.

Nourishing it is your challenge.



# Creativity *noun*

cre·a·tiv·i·ty | 'krē-(\*)ā-'ti-və-tē

The ability to produce or use original and unusual ideas.

Cambridge Dictionary © 2022

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Using this guide, stretch beyond your social conditioning and unlearn limitations to awaken your inner creative.

On the following pages, enjoy poetry, philosophy, and a range of activities to help tune into your most creative self. Dive into teachings by Carol S. Dweck, Ellis Paul Torrance, and Adam Grant — among others. Engage your creativity through an open mindset, a creative block toolkit, and recognition of your originality.

This guide will jump-start personal fulfillment through creativity's many colors.

# Imagination

There are no limits within a dream  
Insanity at its most extreme  
Imagination aged the child  
It made me strong, it made me wild

I have ocean secrets growing deep  
They're mine to ponder, mine to keep  
Creativity taught and raised the kid  
It gave me hopes in the places I hid

Sarah Ahmed

# Warm-Up

*One of the best ways to cultivate creativity in our lives is to simply create, so let's start with a simple exercise.*

Don't panic — just grab a timer, your favorite pen, and get ready to create!



**Two-Minute Poem: Write a haiku about the weather.**

A haiku is a three-line poem that has five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second, and five in the third. Set a timer for two minutes, and let the ideas flow.



**Two-Minute Opener: Write the first line of a novel.**

Your book is guaranteed to be a best-seller, so let nothing hold you back. Pick a genre (mystery, historical fiction, romance, etc.) and write the sentence that begins your novel in two minutes.



**Two-Minute Drawing: Draw what you had for breakfast.**

Don't overthink it, just draw for two minutes! Doodles and abstract art are totally welcome.

Click on bars like these to open a new journal entry in Reflection.app with the prompt ready! **Bonus:** As part of your Holstee Membership, you get Premium access to Reflection.app — click now to give it a try!



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP

# Value the Work

[Carol S. Dweck](#), a Stanford University psychologist, writer, and leading researcher in the field of motivation, introduced us to an important shift in mindset related to creative thinking and personal development. Here's a quick overview of the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset.

**Fixed Mindset:** Whatever abilities we have are set; we can't do anything to improve them. Every challenge is a chance to prove mastery and skill level, and every failure is an indication of deficiency, weakness, or lack of skill.

**Growth Mindset:** Abilities are malleable; what we do today will help us improve them, regardless of the intended outcome. We can get better. Failures and mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow.

Dweck links a fixed mindset to perfectionism — an expectation to do things right the first time, every time, and seemingly with ease. This tendency is what Dweck calls the **Duck Syndrome**.

Picture a duck gliding along water. It appears to be cool and calm, smoothly sailing on, totally at ease. Meanwhile, under the surface, the duck is paddling furiously.



“ *Never limit yourself because of others’ limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination.* ”

MAE JEMISON

Perfectionists (and often those with a fixed mindset) adopt this stance, wanting everything they do to appear easy, and when it’s not, hiding or pretending otherwise. This tendency is extremely limiting within creative work, where hard work, commitment, and effort should be valued over perfection and ease.



**What in your life have you truly worked hard at?**

Maybe it was something that felt out of reach or beyond your skill level, but you rolled up your sleeves, got resourceful, and kept trying.

- **What did you learn about yourself in the process?**
- **Take a few moments to reflect on that work.**

Acknowledge the ways the effort you put in helped you grow in some way. Be proud of yourself for that work (we certainly are 🙌).



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP



# A Pledge

Take this pledge and commit to being open and compassionate toward your creative self. Tear this page out, hang it up, or write it in your journal — keep it somewhere you'll see it often. Let it guide you in your effort to prioritize creativity and expression.

## I hereby pledge:

- To create** without fear of others' judgment.
- To accept** criticism and not be burdened by it.
- To make** things for joy, not for ego or wealth.
- To let go** of my self-limiting mindset
- To see** every “mistake” for the growth it really is.
- To celebrate** my effort and progress.
- To be open** to new experiences, observe with a curious mind, and let my instincts guide me.
- To show up** every day.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Vuja De

You've likely heard of déjà vu as the fleeting feeling of having done something before, even though it's new. **Vuja de** is the opposite.

## VUJA DE

Experiencing something familiar as if it were the first time.

Imagine you're in a situation that you've been in many times before and you suddenly feel as if it's the first time ever. This is vuja de and it's a powerful lens for sparking creative thinking.

Read more about vuja de and watch the video of when **George Carlin** first shared this concept in a stand-up routine at [holstee.com/blogs/mindful-matter/vuja-de](https://holstee.com/blogs/mindful-matter/vuja-de)



**What is a challenge or relationship that might benefit from vuja de, seeing it again with totally fresh eyes?**



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP

# The Torrance Test

[Ellis Paul Torrance](#), a pioneering psychologist, dedicated himself to unpacking how children and adults engage with creativity. He designed a non-conventional IQ test to measure a person's creativity through a squiggle prompt on a piece of paper. Higher scores were awarded for responses that included rich imagery, implied narrative, or used humor or fantasy.

To engage our creative side, we're going to do the **Torrance Test of Creative Thinking**. You won't be scored, so have fun!

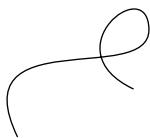
On the next page, there are two squiggles. With them as starting points, use your imagination to create two unique pictures.

## TIP

The creative muscle, like any other muscle in our body, gets stronger with practice. The best way to get started is to jump right in. So don't overthink this activity and remember to be kind to yourself.

“ *Creativity is not the finding of a thing, but the making something out of it after it is found.* ”

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL



# Explore Your Originality

*As technology increasingly influences the way we create and source inspiration, it can feel challenging to be original – to do something different, to be one-of-a-kind.*

**Adam Grant**, author of *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, believes that people who champion originality are the ones who propel the world forward. And guess what? Non-conformists — originals — are not so different from conformists. They feel the same fears and doubts, but instead of succumbing to these thought patterns, they explore them and take action in response.

**Adam identifies five ways we can increase originality:**

- 01 **Question** the default
- 02 **Protect** your downside
- 03 **Broaden** your interests
- 04 **Generate** more bad ideas
- 05 **Procrastinate** on purpose

Inspired by Adam's advice, we've come up with **five prompts** to help you bring out your inner original.

- 1 **Question the default.** It's true, originals take the road less traveled and, as a result, challenge the norm more often. This is a big distinction between originals and conformists.
- **In what ways have you challenged the default option or chosen a different route?**

- 2 Protect your downside.** “Having a sense of security in one realm gives us the freedom to be original in another,” shares Adam. For example, if you cover your bases financially, you have more freedom to invest in that business you always wanted to start.
- **Identify a security you have in place right now (community, job, finances, etc.) that would allow you to take a risk.**
- 3 Broaden your interests.** People with a range of interests are more likely to make original discoveries that lead to successes.
- **What are three of your unexplored interests? How can you start exploring them?**
- 4 Generate more bad ideas.** It’s been proven that simply generating more ideas (even if it means producing less than great work) creates a pathway to ideas that ultimately stick.
- **Name one thing you’ll create more of this month without judgment.**
- 5 Procrastinate on purpose.** Adam says, “Once a task is finished, we stop thinking about it. But when it is interrupted and left undone, it stays active in our minds.” While it may feel counterintuitive, this “incubation period” is often when our subconscious connects the dots, allowing entirely new ideas to take shape.
- **What projects are you working on that could benefit from this form of purposeful procrastination?**



ANSWER THIS PROMPT IN REFLECTION.APP

# Creative Block Toolkit

Regardless of what we do from 9 to 5 each day, creativity is a tool we use often — when improvising a recipe, writing a compelling email, or doodling in our planners. Every day, creativity helps us solve problems and enrich our lives.

The magic of creativity is not only having a new idea, but also seeing it through to completion. Naturally, some challenges and creative blocks will come up from time to time. Here are a few tools to help break through these blocks.

## FLOW

When we are fully absorbed in an activity, we are in a mental state of flow. As proposed by positive psychologist [Mihály Csikszentmihályi](#), when we're in flow we are fully locked into what we're doing, we may experience a transformation of time (slowing down/speeding up), and we feel a balance of challenge and skill.

**To increase flow, do the following:**

- 01 **Free yourself** of distractions and interruptions

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- 02 Consider what **times of day** you're most productive

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- 03 **Replicate** past moments of flow

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- 04 Consider what **motivates** you intrinsically

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- 05 Give yourself **constraints** to work within (see **pg. 17** for some ideas!)

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- 06 **Choose** work you truly love

## DIVERGENT AND CONVERGENT THINKING

The type of thinking that sparks creative ideas is often not the same as what's required to deliver them.

### DIVERGENT THINKING

New ideas require **Divergent Thinking**, which is free-flowing and non-linear. It's "blue-sky thinking." It doesn't need to be rational or feasible, and oftentimes it doesn't take place at a desk. It might be prompted by activities like going for a walk, cooking, taking a shower, or simply stepping away from your screen.

**Generating** and **exploring** a wide variety of ideas

**Spontaneous**, free-flowing, non-linear

Idea phase

#### Prompt It:

- Be curious, ask questions.
- Free write for five minutes.
- Go for a walk.
- Get away from screens.

### CONVERGENT THINKING

**Convergent Thinking**, on the other hand, is structured and methodical. It can include analyzing ideas and planning how to implement them. It might be prompted by making lists, considering outcomes, and constructing a timeline.

**Evaluating** and **analyzing** ideas to arrive at the best or most logical answer

**Methodical**, organized, linear

Planning/implementation phase

#### Prompt It:

- Compile a list.
- Write down what you know.
- Consider all outcomes.
- Draw a timeline.

Both types of thinking are important for creative work so be sure to balance them accordingly.



## INCUBATION PERIOD

Have you ever had a good idea come to you while in the shower? Then you may know the value of the Incubation Period. It may feel counterproductive, but taking a moment to pause from actively working, especially if you are experiencing a creative block, allows your conscious and unconscious mind to make new connections.

### How to work with an Incubation Period:



**Plan ahead** for inactive time

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**Sleep** on it if possible

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**Don't settle** for a first draft

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**Meditate** or stretch

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Work in a **different medium**



COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY AS A  
SPECIAL GUIDE IN REFLECTION.APP

# 30-Day Challenge

This month, your challenge is to create something each day. We are intentionally leaving this open-ended, so you have the freedom to get creative in any way you want. The single most important thing you can do is show up every day. Here are some tips to lead you in your creativity journey:

**Establish Routines:** Are you more clear-headed, creative, and productive early in the morning or at night? What are your least productive times of day? Build time for your expression of creativity (writing, painting, singing, cooking, etc.) around these rhythms.

**Give Yourself Constraints:** One of the best ways to fight through creative block is to give yourself rules and constraints. Assign yourself a time limit, a challenge to write a certain number of sentences per day, or paint something using only your least favorite color and see if you can make something beautiful.



**Make a list of some of the things you'd like to try.**

- **At the end of 30 days, reflect on the experience. What were some of your favorite moments from this challenge?**

“ *Fall in love with the process and the results will follow.* ”

BRADLEY WHITFORD

# Reflect & Discuss

*Use these questions for self-reflection or to spark meaningful conversations.*

## ICEBREAKERS

*What is your favorite creative outlet?*

*Who inspires you to think differently?*

*What creative activity can you get completely absorbed in?*

## DEEPER QUESTIONS

*What is something creative you did when you were younger that you no longer do? Why don't you still do it?*

*What is something you'd like to create but are afraid to start?*

*What part of your day requires you to be most creative?*

*Are you a perfectionist? Does this help or hinder your creativity?*

“ *You can't use  
up creativity.  
The more you use,  
the more you have.*

MAYA ANGELOU

Copyright © Holstee Inc. 2022 — This kit is inspired by our readings from Sarah Ahmed, Carol S. Dweck, Mae Jemison, George Carlin, Ellis Paul Torrance, James Russell Lowell, Adam Grant, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, Bradley Whitford, and Maya Angelou.

For further reading and curated resources visit: [holstee.com/creativity](https://holstee.com/creativity)